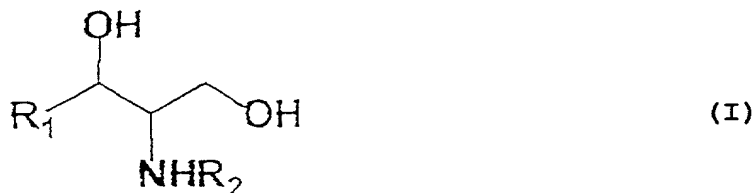


WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

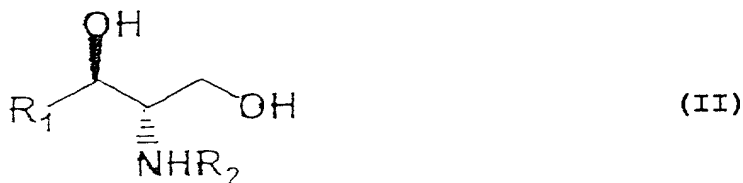
1. A clear aqueous ceramide composition comprising
(A) 1.0 to 5.0% by weight, based on the total composition,
of a ceramide represented by formula (I):



10 wherein R_1 represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and R_2 represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

(B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24 carbon atoms, (C) a nonionic surface active agent, and (D) water.

15 2. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, wherein said ceramide represented by formula (I) is an optically active ceramide of natural type represented by formula (II):



wherein R_1 and R_2 are as defined in claim 1.

25 3. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according

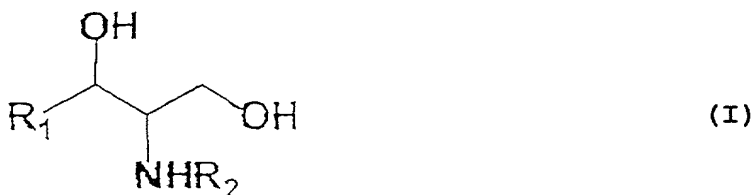
to claim 1, wherein said long-chain fatty acid is at least one of isostearic acid and oleic acid.

4. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, wherein said nonionic surface active agent is a polyoxyethylene hydrogenated castor oil.

5. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 1, which further comprises at least one compound selected from the group consisting of a sterol compound and a polyhydric alcohol.

6. The clear aqueous ceramide composition according to claim 5, wherein said sterol compound is cholesterol.

7. A method of preparing a clear aqueous composition comprising 1.0 to 5.0% by weight of a ceramide represented by formula (I):



wherein R_1 represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and R_2 represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

comprising adding water to a lipid composition comprising (A) said ceramide, (B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24

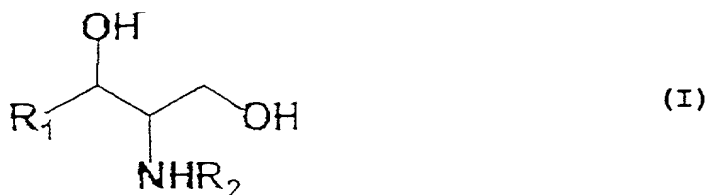
carbon atoms, and (C) a nonionic surface active agent.

8. A skin-care cosmetic comprising 0.01 to 100% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

9. A hair-care cosmetic comprising 0.01 to 50% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

10. A bath agent comprising 0.01 to 50% by weight of the clear aqueous ceramide composition of claim 1.

11. A lipid composition for preparing a clear aqueous ceramide composition, the lipid composition comprising (A) a ceramide represented by formula (I):



wherein R_1 represents a hydrocarbon group having 9 to 17 carbon atoms; and R_2 represents an acyl group having 2 to 30 carbon atoms which can contain a hydroxyl group,

(B) a long-chain fatty acid having 12 to 24 carbon atoms, and

(C) a nonionic surface active agent, wherein the weight ratio of component (A) to component (B) is from 20:1 to 1:3, and the weight ratio of component (A) to component (C) is from 1:1 to 1:10.